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# Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin

Published Bi-monthly. Subscription price, 50 cents per year postpaid. Single copies, 10 cents  
Entered July 2, 1903, at Boston, Mass., as Second-Class Matter, under Act of Congress of July 16, 1894

VOL. XIII

BOSTON, JUNE, 1915

No. 77

## THE USE OF THE MUSEUM

### I. The Collections

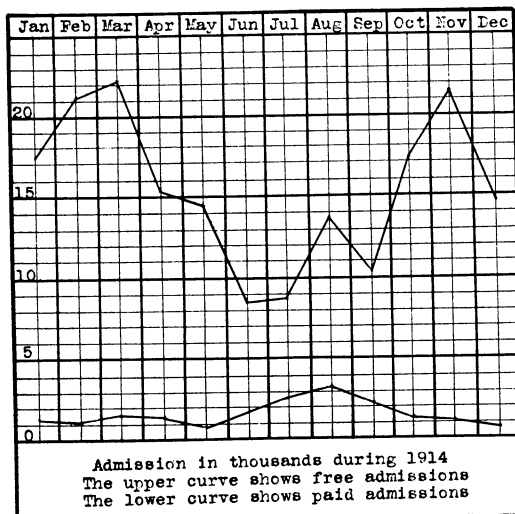
#### *Admissions to the Museum*

OVER two hundred thousand people visited the Museum during 1914. This is far from the number that would be recorded were the building more centrally located. In moving from Copley Square in 1909 the Museum moved away from the most thickly populated part of the city. During the three years before leaving Copley Square the average annual attendance at the Museum was about 250,000. During the past three years on the Fenway the average has been about 215,000. This is about 29 per cent. of the estimated population of the city for this year. The percentage is a fair one judging by the figures from other museums. During 1914 the admissions to the Metropolitan Museum in New York, in a situation more central, were 35 per cent. of the estimated population of the Borough of Manhattan for the year; and the admissions to the Chicago Art Institute, in the heart of the city, were 36 per cent. of the population; while the visitors to the Museum of the Brooklyn Institute in Prospect Park were but 13 per cent. of the inhabitants of the Borough of Brooklyn. No conspicuous change in the attendance at our Museum can be looked for except as the population within easy reach grows larger, either by the growth of Boston westward or the multiplication of means of access. Meanwhile some little increase may be expected from the greater attraction of a larger and better arranged building and of larger collections. These causes seem already at work.

Nine-tenths of the visitors come on Saturdays, Sundays, and public holidays—the days when admission to the Museum is free. On Sunday alone, although the building is open only during the afternoon, the number of visitors is 45 per cent. of the number for the year. The Sunday attendance is a representative selection of the native population of the city, including a large proportion of men, especially of young men. The foreign-born population is not so conspicuous in the galleries on Sundays now as it was in the Copley Square Museum.

The figures for the months of 1914 are typical

of variations in attendance which take place throughout every year. The curves for paid and free admissions show an opposition at first sight curious. The free admissions, that is, the visitors on Saturdays, Sundays, and public holidays, show two waves of larger numbers, one in the spring, one in the autumn. The first attains its maximum in March and gradually falls to the lowest levels of the year during the early summer, June and July. The second wave starts in August and reaches its maximum in November, falling in December and January to a minimum rather higher than that of summer. Of the two vacation periods the early summer evidently offers the free visitors counter-vailing attractions, while the darkest days and inclement weather of midwinter have their effect with that of the indoor holiday season. The paid admissions also show two waves: one coinciding with the spring wave of free admissions, but the other reversing the depression in the free admissions during the early summer. This midsummer increase in paid admissions is much more marked than any of the other waves, reaching in August a height over three times the low levels of midwinter and late spring. It is accompanied by a temporary increase in free admissions, showing that the Museum is much frequented during the late summer





*Chinese and Japanese Study*

by both classes of visitors. This may be taken as testimony to the use of New England as a holiday resort by strangers. On their way to and from their vacations on the coast they stop in Boston and visit the Museum.

The largest total of admissions on any one week in the history of the Copley Square Museum was reached during the convention of the National Educational Association in July, 1903, when the turnstiles registered over 18,000 visitors. In the present Museum the remarkable interest displayed by all classes in Boston in the exhibition of Mr. Frick's collection of pictures in 1910 produced another and greater maximum. In a fortnight nearly 50,000 people visited the Museum, about a fifth of the number of visitors for the whole year. Admission to this exhibition was free, except on Mondays. On the other hand, it took place in December, under customary conditions one of the months of fewest admissions.

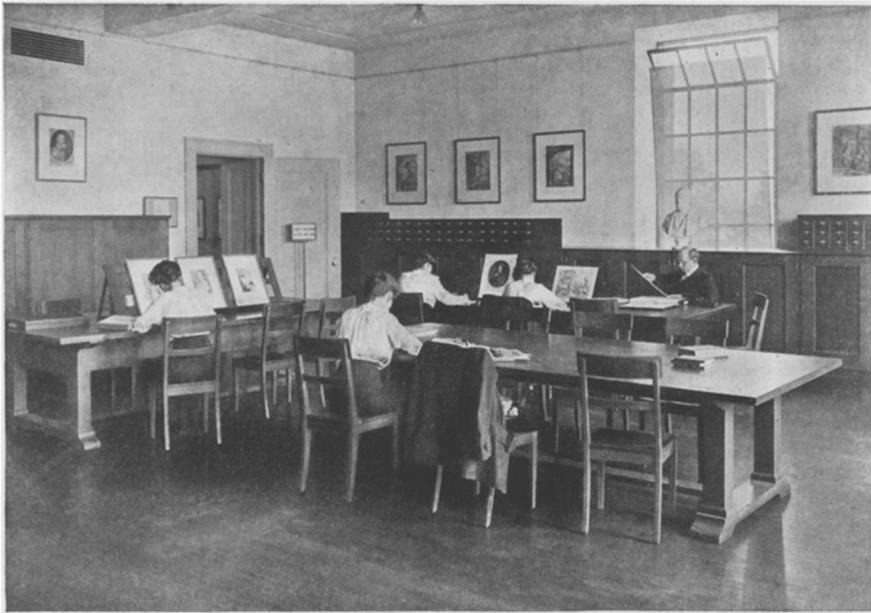
*Attendance in the Departments*

The most popular galleries are naturally the Picture Galleries; more especially since they have now taken their permanent place with the collection of Prints in their own wing of the Museum. The galleries of Western Art, containing the collections of minor art from Europe and the Levant, come next, on account both of their variety of interest and their comparative nearness in spirit to our people and our own day. The wide popular interest in the most remote in time of all our collections is a surprise. There seems to be a special charm for young and old in our immemorial remains from the valley of the Nile that brings more visitors to the

Egyptian Galleries of the Museum than even to the Classical collections, both larger, more varied, and more comprehensible to the modern world. The art of the Orient is naturally that which has least appeal at present to the mass of visitors. Yet as one of the chief outposts of Oriental civilization in the West, so far as civilization is represented in products of fine art, the future has without question a rôle of great importance for this Museum. Time may be relied on to make our immense display of the best Chinese and Japanese art a focus of living interest.

*Visitors' Queries*

Inquiries for one or other collection or for the entrances are the most frequent. Although the departmental plan of the Museum is a simple one, — Egypt and Greece in the east wing, China and Japan in the west wing, Western, or European, Art in galleries radiating from the centre, and Pictures and Prints in the Fenway wing to the north, — visitors often go astray in spite of many signs and maps, especially on the lower floor. The experience of the Museum goes to show that the ability to read a map is an unusual accomplishment, and that signs are the more reliable means of direction. Nevertheless, plans of both floors, printed on two sides of a card and giving the names of all the galleries, with other information, have recently been placed on sale at the door at five cents apiece. It is too soon at present to judge of their usefulness. Even signs often prove ineffectual, and the custodians about the galleries are called on to supply the deficiency. The requests for direction — "Where are the old costumes you used

*Print Study*

to show?" "Where are the mummies?" "How do we get out?" — are mingled with many others — "Who arranged this room?" "Does the City help support the Museum?" "Did Copley die in America?" "Why is the Slave Ship considered so great?" Many of these questions are beyond the competence of the custodians, and in anticipation of these each custodian is provided with pencil and paper, and is instructed to take down, if desired by the visitor, his question and his name and address. The paper is eventually handed to the proper officer of the Museum, who returns an answer by mail. In the short time during which the plan has been tried not a few questions of interest have been submitted. Were the privilege more generally known it might prove a valuable means of informing the Museum public.

#### *Departmental Studies*

In addition to its service to the general public, the Museum has long recognized and performed a special duty toward students of its collections. The Annual Report of the Trustees for 1887 stated that "the creation of the Departments of Classical Antiquities and of Prints and their committal to experts thoroughly competent to take charge of them, while the Library has been placed under efficient oversight, have proved among the very most successful means of promoting the highest influence of the Museum." From 1887 to the present the officers of these departments and of the others since established have heartily welcomed all interested persons, and sought to place freely at their command all the resources of the Museum. This use of the collections by a small minority of

visitors, wide-reaching and important as it is, remains wholly unknown to the community generally, which reaps its advantage therefrom only indirectly. Hereby are helped those whose duty or pleasure it is to help others to the delight and improvement which an interest in any branch of art ensures to every one. To this end the commodious and well-appointed rooms provided as studies at the center of the ground floor space of each department, are indicated by conspicuous signs and are freely open to all. These offices are used for many purposes of inquiry and instruction. Copyists find examples to imitate, and space, light, and quiet in which to work. The material may be sometimes original and sometimes duplicate objects from the Museum collections, or reproductions of works of art preserved elsewhere. The copyists may be skilled craftsmen seeking models or motives, or perhaps beginners at home industries under charitable auspices; pupils from the School of the Museum and other technical schools accomplishing allotted exercises; students of the history of art taking notes for their courses; elementary pupils set to learn form and color from the best models; amateurs learning to observe by trying to reproduce. A part of the apparatus of each study is a reference library containing standard books for reading and illustrations of standard objects for inspection. To the collectors of every name, — and every one collects something, — the department studies offer the guidance of the Curator and the opportunity to compare private acquisitions with recognized types. Through this channel the Museum exerts a daily influence; and though the number of amateurs visiting the department rooms runs into the thousands annually, it would be greater still were the hospitality of the officers and the

*Library*

accessibility of the rooms better known. Finally, the departments are frequently visited by investigators wishing to prosecute researches upon the collections. The extension of the use of the Museum in this way is a factor of great importance in its public function. The science of archæology and the art of connoisseurship have their natural home in a museum building, and in ours the apartments and the apparatus are liberally provided, and the colleagues are present to aid. The literature of art every year bears witness by one and another study from our collections at once to their value and to the welcome here accorded the visiting scholar.

Among the workshops of the Museum one is in part devoted to the service of the outside world. This is the Caster's Shop, illustrated on page 44, where casts in plaster of marbles, bronzes, and terracottas in the Museum collections are made for sale at cost to institutions or individuals. The caster is kept busy throughout the year, both on these commissions and in reproducing and overseeing the reproduction of the work of pupils of the modelling classes at the School. G.

#### *The Library*

The Library is unique among the departments of the Museum in that it exists for service alone. A book that is valued for its binding goes to the Department of Western Art, a book valued for its engravings goes to the Department of Prints; but the 15,000 volumes in the Library are there because of their practical usefulness to students. Such a collection of books was mentioned by the Trustees in their first appeal in 1870; and the

first restricted gift received by the Museum was \$1,000 for the purchase of books. It has not been possible to purchase all the *desiderata* of a complete and well-balanced art library, such as should exist in Boston; effort has therefore been concentrated on obtaining what are needed for the study and understanding of the actual collections of the Museum. This standard has been fairly maintained, and the resulting collection forms a strong foundation for the wider development if funds should ever be available.

The first aim of the Library is to serve the needs of the staff, whose requests for books use most of the purchase funds. Many of the more technical works are deposited in the study-rooms of the various departments, where they can be used in connection with the study-collections. Students of design make use of the many plates and illustrations in working out their problems, while students of the history of art find much to serve their needs. Readers come in to obtain more information about objects seen in the galleries or to find out about some article of art that has come into their possession. Besides its readers, the Library serves many inquirers by mail; all sorts of reference questions come to the Museum from all over the country, and these are generally turned over to the Library. It is the policy to reply to all such inquiries, giving such information as can be found or referring the inquirers to better sources. A favorite subject of inquiry is as to names and lives of minor artists, and these are often hard to trace.

The 40,000 photographs in the adjoining room are used in similar ways: for the study of



*Photograph Room*

a given topic, for the identification of a picture or object, or for the obtaining of suggestions for design. The photographs are lent outside the Museum to responsible persons for a period of forty-eight hours, and much use is made of this privilege by schools and study clubs of Eastern Massachusetts. A collection of pictures clipped from magazines, mounted on cheap boards and filed by subject, provides at small cost a surprising amount of useful material that would be hard to obtain elsewhere. Adjoining the Photograph Room is a small room containing the Tolman Collection of photographs of Italian painting, a highly specialized and carefully classified collection, of great value to students in that field of art. F. S.

## II. Instruction at the Museum

The use of the word "education" in connection with a Museum of Fine Arts would seem at first glance to be somewhat incongruous. It suggests the classroom, the laboratory: one thinks of set tasks and of drearily acquired information. With such things a Museum has nothing in common. It is a place devoted, first of all, to enjoyment. And could æsthetic appreciation not be fostered the activities grouped under the heading of Educational Work would be vain. But dormant perceptive faculties can be awakened and developed; appreciation can be cultivated and the ability to enjoy beautiful things be increased. Holding this faith the Museum strives in many ways to help its visitors with friendly guidance, lectures, and formal and informal discussions: not forced upon the attention of those who care not for such things, but freely at the service of those who desire them.

### *Docent Service: Week-days*

Perhaps the most satisfactory form of guidance is that offered under the title of Week-day Docent

Service. Save on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, any person or group of persons may ask to be shown the collections and is given an hour's guidance by a member of the Staff. This most nearly reaches the ideal stated by Mr. Gilman in describing the character of docent service in the Annual Report of the Museum for 1912: it "is not guidance, but companionship." As the public learns of the privileges thus offered the number of requests for such service steadily increases: from small groups, from clubs, and from schools and colleges in and near Boston. In 1914 3,385 were so met. During that year there were 148 appointments with classes from schools: 2,513 pupils of public and private schools being shown, under guidance, such objects as would make more real, more vivid, the studies pursued in the classroom. In a single month (March, 1915) 937 students have been thus encouraged to study at first hand objects illustrating, or at least illuminating, the life of other times.

### *Docent Service: Sundays*

The Sunday Docent service differs from the week-day service: in the latter the request for a talk on a specified subject comes from without; in the former the Museum announces definite talks.

On every Sunday from October to June two speakers meet the visitors during the afternoon: the speakers and subjects being announced a week in advance by special leaflets and in the newspapers. These speakers are friends of the Museum who give their services—and to these friends the Museum is deeply grateful.

The topics are most varied and the form which the talks take varies as well. Sometimes a lecture with the stereopticon is given; sometimes the speaker will take his audience on a tour through several galleries; or, again, the audience may be

*Western Art Study*

seated before a single object and the discussion confined to that. Of the visitors who attend these talks some come for that special purpose; many, attracted by the sound of speaking, linger to listen—and these chance auditors, becoming interested, often prove to be most intelligent questioners. The interesting of such casual visitors is one of the important functions of the Sunday talks, and those who speak are often pleasantly surprised at the eagerness and appreciative insight of their interlocutors.

#### *Thursday Conferences and other Lectures*

Somewhat different from Week-day or Sunday Docent service are the series of Thursday Conferences held each winter. These are given usually by members of the Staff: the presentation is less "popular" in character than the Sunday conferences, and those attending must secure tickets. These are issued free, upon request; but the number is restricted that the audiences may not be so large that the spirit of friendly, intimate discussion will be lost. Tickets to these are eagerly sought, since in these conferences the public has an opportunity of hearing experts talk about the most interesting of the Museum's treasures.

Besides these announced conferences others are held. It has become the custom for little groups of people to join in asking for series of talks on specified topics, presenting to the Museum, in return for these special favors, funds to assist in carrying on the educational work.

Each year the Museum offers to the public lectures by men eminent in their chosen fields. For these special invitations are issued. The

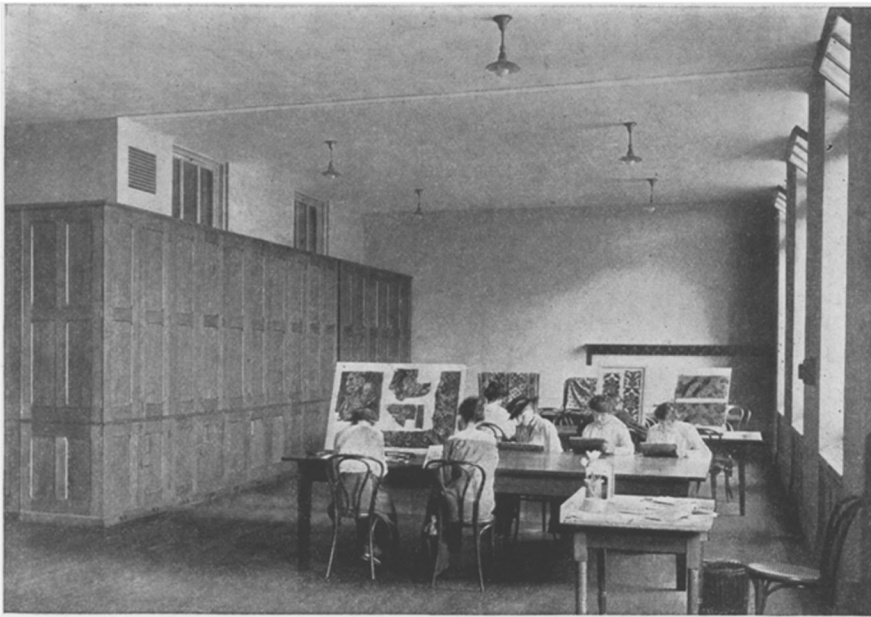
Museum also offers courses of lectures given by members of the Staff or of the Faculty of the School under the auspices of the Commission on Extension Courses.

To further the knowledge of the treasures of the Museum members of the Staff give, without remuneration, illustrated talks on the collections. In 1914 there were eleven requests for such talks.

The telling of stories to children—so delightfully done by Mrs. Scales—is described on another page. A story hour for children is also a feature of the summer months. Through the generosity of a friend special cars are chartered and the youngsters brought from the Settlement Houses and playgrounds. Last summer Mrs. Cronin and Miss Hopkins entertained 4,854 children. Since these young people are not being taught history, drawing, or design, but being entertained, little or nothing is said concerning the appreciation of beautiful objects, though where possible the stories are woven about the objects shown. It is hoped that unconsciously the children will develop the faculty of enjoying works of art and as they grow older will look upon the Museum as a place of pleasure and recreation.

#### *Students of Art. Pupils of the Schools*

The collections of the Museum are constantly used by students of the fine and applied arts. Especially is this true of the pupils in the School of the Museum. Drawing and research work in the Museum is demanded. The students draw from casts of Classic and Renaissance sculpture, and in their advanced work have the privilege of drawing from Greek originals. The paintings are studied

*Textile Study*

and copied; in the Department of Prints they make wood-cuts and etchings, and the objects of minor art furnish the students of design with an inexhaustible field of research. Greek vases and Oriental ceramics, textiles of every age and clime, Japanese screens, Eastern jewelry, European and Colonial silver, carved wood and furniture of all periods,—these they study in carefully planned courses. It might almost be claimed that here the ideal is reached—that here in the Museum *is* the School. The Library and the splendid collection of photographs—supplemented by a large collection of clippings from contemporary publications, mounted and indexed—afford an additional field of research. The many lecture courses offered by the School—open, upon the payment of a small fee, to those not registered in the School—are given in the Museum, in many cases the Museum's lantern slides and its collections being used as illustrative material. In connection with the regular school work there are held in the Museum special classes in drawing and design for High School pupils. Classes for children are also conducted by Miss Deborah Kallen; the results of this most individual teaching have been unusually interesting.

Much use is made of the collections for the study of the Fine Arts by the other art schools, colleges, and teachers of private classes in drawing and design. The Museum offers almost unrestricted privileges; its galleries and classrooms may be freely used by accredited schools and teachers, a nominal charge being made only when the stereopticon is used. The halls may be also used by clubs and organizations when the subjects discussed at the meetings in any way concern the fine or applied arts.

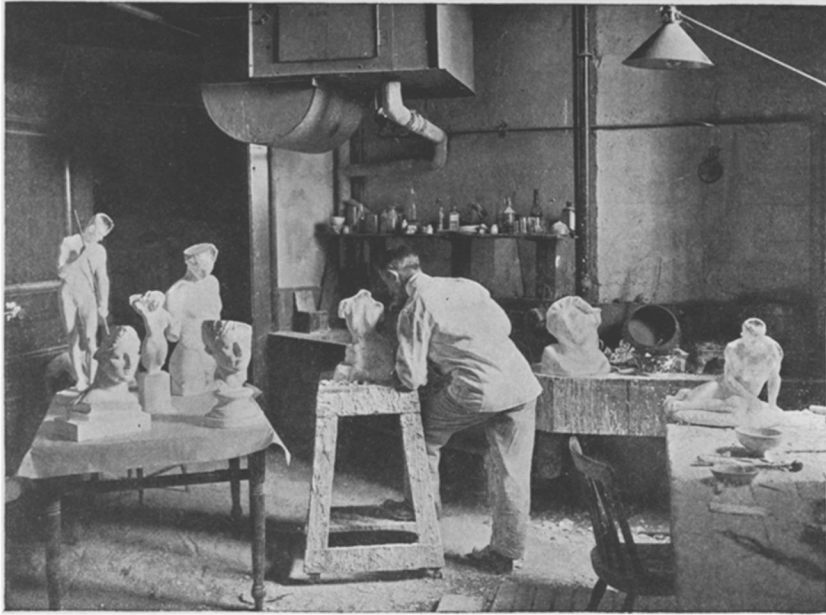
For the assistance of teachers in the public schools lists of objects illustrating historic periods, the daily life or the mythology of various peoples have been compiled, that the teachers may bring or send classes to the Museum to gather material for class use, copies of these lists being sent free to those asking for them.

To further the usefulness of the Museum in connection with the teaching in the schools there have been prepared, with the help of the public school authorities and teachers, sets of lantern slides and of half-tones illustrating not only history and literature, but also drawing and design. The slides have been used by supervisors to illustrate special talks; the half-tones are given by the schools to the children that they may be used to illustrate written themes. Books containing postcard reproductions, issued by the Museum, are lent to the schools that the teachers as well as pupils may learn of its treasures. Furthermore, a large number of photographs of those objects apt to be most useful for school work have been enlarged,—in many cases to the size of the originals,—and these are freely lent upon request, as are the duplicate textiles and prints. H. E.

#### *Stories for Children*

The “gloom” of a Museum has been written of enough, but Museums now are writing for the boys and girls of the community a new chapter called the “Joy of the Museum.” For the past two winters, this Museum has made the beginning on such an essay and as a preliminary announcement has sent out to the schools a charming poster inviting the boys and girls over ten years old to come to the Lecture Hall on Saturday afternoons for



*Caster's Shop*

Pictures and Stories. For the first time the Museum was opening wide its doors to younger children unattended by adults; and in response, in came the children from the streets, averaging 100 each Saturday; yet (with due acknowledgment of the watchfulness of custodians and others) these little people have for the most part shown by their behavior as well as their enthusiasm that they were ready to be welcomed to the Museum. By far the larger per cent. were boys and always they were the more attentive. The nucleus of the group in both years was the same — Irish, Jewish, and native-born — and the regular comers, those “who did not miss one,” were from the immediate neighborhood, for no free carfares were given.

They came frankly to the “Movies,” for so all illustrated talks are dubbed, and frequently they inquired to make sure that the pictures would be changed each time. The stories both this winter and last were the Greek myths: the first year, stories of the Heroes; this year, stories of Nature. Occasionally, if the story lasted for forty-five minutes, the hum of restlessness murmured through the hall; but even so, the more ardent spirits admitted that they could have “stood more,” or even announced that it seemed “only three minutes.” The occasional repetition of a few lines of poetry was invariably like oil upon troubled waters. The pictures shown on the screen were purely Greek — statues and buildings, scenes from the vases, a few Pompeian paintings, and some landscapes. The children became familiar with the Greek gods and heroes as pictured by the Greeks themselves, and as far as possible they were shown objects in this Museum: for the sequel to the story-hour was always a visit to the galleries. It was possible to

do this because each year a few graduates from the private schools of Boston have kindly volunteered their help so that the children might be divided into small groups. This visit has been something of a game, for in each gallery they were allowed to find for themselves the objects shown on the screen, and the speed with which they recognized them was almost breathless: and though their description of what vase, painting, or statue meant was incoherent, there was an undoubted sense of familiarity and pleasant acquaintance with the objects.

It was an increasing surprise to see in these children — brought up in a generation fed on the “Movies” and the colored Sunday supplement — the genuine interest in a statue classic in its reserve and simplicity, and to notice that a room full of Greek vases, instead of being the meaningless place it is to so many of their elders, became to them a happy hunting ground. Some of the boys have since brought in pictures cut from the newspapers or extracted from the waste basket at school illustrating the stories they had heard. To open eyes and stimulate imaginations, as well as to give an introduction to the Museum, has been part of the purpose in telling the Greek myth. Following this year’s stories, a few of the children have continued to come to the Museum to learn drawing under Miss Kallen, and still more have returned each Saturday to *play* at drawing in the galleries (really a method of learning to see) and to travel from country to country, hearing a little of rugs and rug-making in Persia, of symbols and customs in ancient Egypt, or of how people live in Japan.

Already there is talk among them of next year, “when there will be more stories, won’t there?”

L. W. L. S.